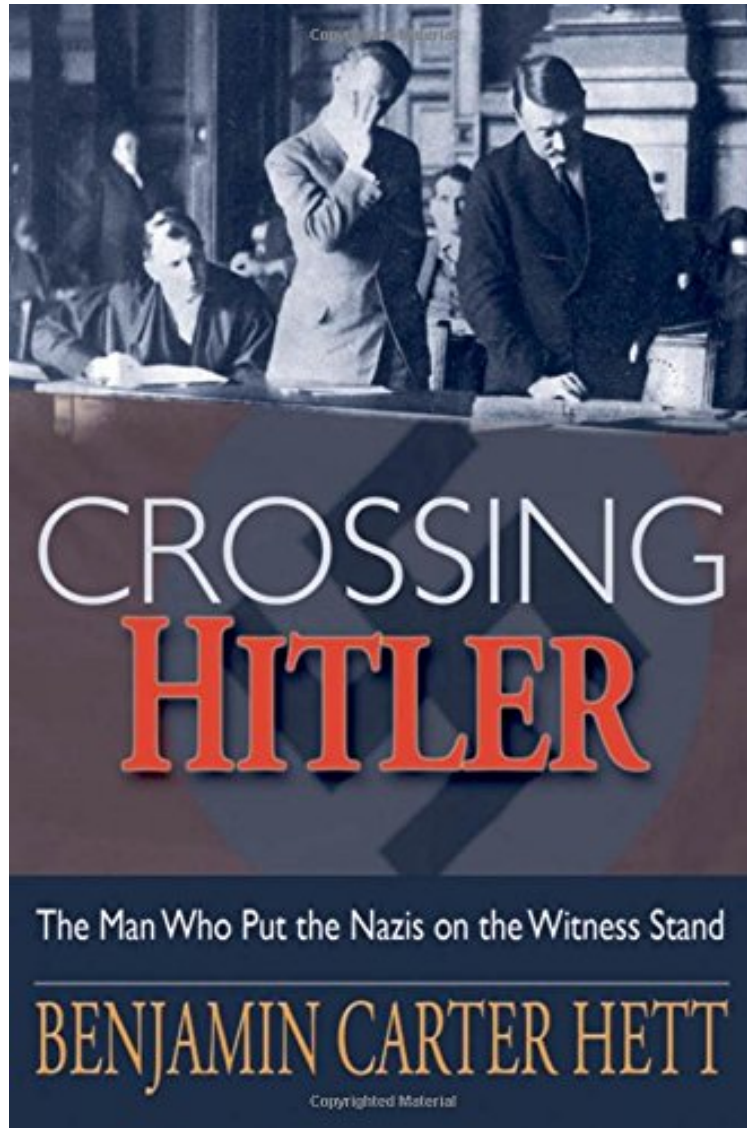


[Download pdf] Crossing Hitler: The Man Who Put the Nazis on the Witness Stand

## Crossing Hitler: The Man Who Put the Nazis on the Witness Stand

*Benjamin Carter Hett*

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#1555681 in Books Benjamin Carter Hett 2008-09-18 Original language: English PDF # 1 6.40 x 1.10 x 9.40l, 1.40 #File Name: 0195369882368 pages Crossing Hitler The Man Who Put the Nazis on the Witness Stand | File size: 35.Mb

**Benjamin Carter Hett : Crossing Hitler: The Man Who Put the Nazis on the Witness Stand** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Crossing Hitler: The Man Who Put the Nazis on the Witness Stand:

31 of 33 people found the following review helpful. Insightful Study of Hans Litten and the German Legal System of 1930s in Turmoil. By mirasreviews "Crossing Hitler: The Man Who Put the Nazis on the Witness Stand" is a biography

of Hans Litten, a crusading German lawyer whose life ended prematurely at Dachau concentration camp in 1938, seven years after he pressed Adolf Hitler into a fit of rage on the witness stand at the Eden Dance Palace Trial. A recent revival in interest and regard for Litten in Germany has led to some sanitizing of his character and politics, which author Benjamin Carter Hett attempts to dispel. He presents a picture of a complex and radical man, a champion of the downtrodden, intolerant and inflexible, anti-Weimar Republic, anti-Nazi, anti-democratic, sympathetic to Communists but not one of them, who believed in the law, which he used to advance social and political consciousness in the volatile last years of the Weimar Republic. Hett doesn't dedicate much space to Litten's personal life, if, indeed, he had a personal life. He was an obsessive man for whom everything revolved around the goals he pursued in the courtroom. There is detailed coverage of Litten's role and Hitler's difficulty in the 1931 Eden Dance Palace Trial in which four Nazi stormtroopers were accused of the attempted murder of three people at a Berlin party, a trial that may have sealed Litten's fate years hence. A year later, Litten was expelled from court for politicizing another trial of Nazi stormtroopers, this time for a violent clash with the communist Combat League Against Fascism. The book then follows Litten's movement through a series of prisons and concentration camps as a political prisoner after he was arrested in 1933. Hans Litten is an interesting, if not likeable, man who had an important career at a pivotal time and place in history. But I found "Crossing Hitler" most illuminating when discussing the legal climate in Germany in the years just before and after the Nazi party came to power. The author goes beyond the idea that the Weimar judicial system was simply soft on the political right to present a broader picture of a varied legal system that was in the throes of upheaval in the early 1930s, yet managing still to function. The tireless efforts of Hans Litten's friends Max and Margot Furst and his mother Irmgard to free him from prison reveal a bureaucracy in the grasp of Nazi power but not yet entirely subdued by it. "Crossing Hitler" is an insightful and sometimes eloquent look at how a legal system behaved in the midst of political turmoil, through the experiences of a revolutionary lawyer.

10 of 11 people found the following review helpful. Cross examining the madness of the Nazi party  
By Wayne Klein  
In 1931 the Nazi party hadn't gained complete control of Germany and Hitler's mad shadow hadn't begun to completely plunge Germany in darkness. Hans Litten had the Nazi party on the stand when four of Nazi stormtroopers were accused and tried for attempted murder and assault. Litten did what would in retrospect be unthinkable by many people--he put Hitler on the stand. Hitler desperately sought the support of the German middle class and decided to distance himself from some of the more extreme behavior from the Nazi party. Hitler wanted to be seen as someone who was using the political and legal system properly to deal with issues within his party and outside of it. Litten knew differently. The prosecuting attorney called proceeded to grill Hitler on the stand about his association with the Nazi party, what he knew and condoned managing to make the future Führer furious with Litten. Bravery has its cost even when we don't see the outcome of our actions or others. Litten who espoused left wing political causes and embraced his Jewish heritage found himself in constant conflict with the Nazi party and what they were attempting to do in Germany. The result once Hitler took power was that Litten was thrown into Dachau first as a political prisoner and, later, because of he was a Jew. Hitler had Litten tortured, humiliated and tried to defeat him. All the while Litten held on to the knowledge of that he was on the side of right and that eventually Hitler would get his due. A fascinating biography, Crossing Hitler is well researched and written by Benjamin Carter Hett. Hett knows his history--he is an Associate Professor of History at Hunter College and also knows the law having practiced as a former trial lawyer. His background gives us unique insight into Germany just as the country was turning the corner from the devastation of the first World War only to be plunged into darkness by the Hitler and the Nazi party. The only flaw with the book is that sometimes Hett lets the pacing lag a bit. Given that this book operates as both biography and history focusing on the trial where Litten put Hitler on the stand, I expected the book to open with that trial and work in details backwards from there. Perhaps it was my expectation but a chronological detailed account of Litten's life while important should have been bookended by the trial and its aftermath. To Hett's credit, he isn't pedantic and his style immediately involves you in the events he describes. Hett gives us a unique portrait of Litten through interviews and correspondence that reveals a complex man who while a hero could be every bit as human and frail as you or me. Once the moment of bravery has past, it's how you deal with the consequences of that bravery that gives us a sense of the character. This is an extremely well written book that despite some minor flaws should be read particularly by those who felt that all Germans didn't oppose Hitler, the Nazi party and their transformation of Germany from a rising nation to a butcher shop that tore apart the country as it needlessly took human lives.

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. An inspiring tale in the highest degree  
By Julian Tan  
A personal account of an inspiring figure in recent history, who was willing to stand up uncompromisingly for morals and political beliefs in the face of personal detriment. The author paints a picture of a hard-working, upright yet socially awkward man, who used his brilliant professional skills as a lawyer in the German courts to the utmost in pursuing justice against acts committed by the Nazis. It is with the benefit of hindsight that we judge these same acts as criminal, and it is even more striking then that Hitler himself was put on the witness stand, only to be acquitted by the German courts of any wrongdoing. It is saddening to imagine how the course of history might have been changed had the outcome been different. In the latter part of the book, Litten himself pays the ultimate price - being thrown into concentration camps as an act of personal revenge by Hitler, and the numerous failed attempts for his release by his family members and close friends. This is an inspiring tale in the

highest degree - of courage, perseverance, principles and sacrifice by this man and those around him who he influenced.

During a 1931 trial of four Nazi stormtroopers, known as the Eden Dance Palace trial, Hans Litten grilled Hitler in a brilliant and merciless three-hour cross-examination, forcing him into multiple contradictions and evasions and finally reducing him to helpless and humiliating rage (the transcription of Hitler's full testimony is included.) At the time, Hitler was still trying to prove his embrace of legal methods, and distancing himself from his stormtroopers. The courageous Litten revealed his true intentions, and in the process, posed a real threat to Nazi ambition. When the Nazis seized power two years after the trial, friends and family urged Litten to flee the country. He stayed and was sent to the concentration camps, where he worked on translations of medieval German poetry, shared the money and food he was sent by his wealthy family, and taught working-class inmates about art and literature. When Jewish prisoners at Dachau were locked in their barracks for weeks at a time, Litten kept them sane by reciting great works from memory. After five years of torture and hard labor-and a daring escape that failed-Litten gave up hope of survival. His story was ultimately tragic but, as Benjamin Hett writes in this gripping narrative, it is also redemptive. "It is a story of human nobility in the face of barbarism." The first full-length biography of Litten, the book also explores the turbulent years of the Weimar Republic and the terror of Nazi rule in Germany after 1933. [in sidebar] Winner of the 2007 Fraenkel Prize for outstanding work of contemporary history, in manuscript. To be published throughout the world.

"Hett has written a riveting account of Litten's life."--Jewish Book World"Hett's well-researched history is an excellent introduction, and a creepy reminder of the insidious power of evil."--Dick Cady, ForeWord Magazine"Hett adroitly explains the workings of the Weimar legal system and challenges the conventional wisdom that the German legal profession was, prior to 1933, so right wing that its transition to Nazism was an easy and logical step.... Recommended for all libraries."--Library JournalAbout the AuthorA former trial lawyer, Benjamin Carter Hett is now Associate Professor of History at Hunter College and the author of *Death in the Tiergarten*. He lives in New York City.